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ABSTRACT

It is estimated that within the next 20 years, the majority of elementary, intermediate, and secondary school-age children in the United States will come from "minority" backgrounds. This increasing diversity will present school counselors with many new challenges. To assist counselors with these evolving demands, researchers designed a study to investigate the types of worries Hispanic youth experience during the intermediate and secondary school years. The study was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 involved 92 seventh-grade students attending a public intermediate school, while in Phase 2 a non-randomized sample of 104 ninth graders participated. Both groups answered a 28-item Worries Inventory. Findings indicate that while Hispanic American students reported similar levels of concern about their peers and school-related matters when compared to their Anglo counterparts, the former expressed significantly greater worry about various family, personal, and moral/social issues. These different types of worries indicated by Hispanic and White intermediate and secondary school students confirms the notion that students' psychological development is much more complex when cultural factors are also considered. Many school counseling programs have overlooked or minimized the impact of multicultural factors on children's development. To correct this omission, strategies are offered as to how school counselors may incorporate cultural factors. (RJM)

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A Comparative Study of the Worries of Hispanic and White Students

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A Comparative Study of the Worries of Hispanic and White Students

The cultural and racial composition of intermediate and secondary school-age students is rapidly changing in the United States. In fact, it is estimated that within the next twenty years, the majority of elementary, intermediate, and secondary school-age children in this country will come from "minority" backgrounds (Sue, 1992). This increasing diversity will inevitably present school counselors with a host of new challenges that accompany their efforts to develop programs and provide services designed to promote students' psychological growth and personal well-being.

At the current time, however, many school counselors do not possess the type of awareness and knowledge that is necessary to provide effective multicultural counseling and guidance services in the school setting. There are numerous reasons why counselors often lack understanding of the unique developmental needs, interests, and concerns of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. One important contributing factor is the lack of multicultural counseling training professional programs offer students at the preservice level.

Another critical and more general factor that hampers counselors' multicultural understanding relates to many of the existing school counseling theories which practitioners use to guide their work. While some changes have been made

in recent years, the majority of theories and services discussed in school counseling programs have been tested among sample groups comprised primarily of White, middle class youth (D'Andrea, Faubert, & Locke, 1992).

Given the dearth of empirical knowledge related to the development of students from different cultural backgrounds, additional research clearly needs to be done in this area in order that school counselors might better understand the normal psychological concerns and needs of all the students with whom they work. Until the existing knowledge-base is expanded, counselors are likely to continue to use theories that are simply not relevant to the life experiences of youth who come from diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

In one sense, there has been a noticeable increase in research involving students whose cultural and racial backgrounds are not characterized as being White and middle class. This has been particularly reflected in the number of studies which have focused on the types of problems African American youth experience during childhood and adolescence (Gibbs, 1982; Gold & Petronio, 1980; Greenstein, Porter, Shapiro, Leonard, & Barancik, 1988; Hampton, 1974; Thompson, 1980). Despite the increase in the number of research articles that have been published about the difficulties Black youth experience in their development, critics point to two major shortcomings in this trend.

First, it has been argued that the primary focus of most of these studies has been directed towards identifying and analyzing the perceived deficits and personal problems of African American urban youth (Parham, 1992). This sort of "deficit orientation" reinforces a distorted and largely negative view of minority youth in general and African American children and adolescents in particular (D'Andrea, Faubert, & Locke, 1992).

Second, although numerous investigations have been conducted among Black urban youth, few formal research efforts have been directed towards studying students from other cultural groups. Thus, it is recommended that future efforts should be redirected towards studying the developmental strengths, interests, and concerns of school-aged youth from a variety of different cultural and residential backgrounds (D'Andrea, Faubert, Locke, 1992; Parham, 1992).

With this backdrop in mind, the authors designed a study to investigate the types of worries Hispanic youth experience during their intermediate and secondary school years. In referring to persons participating in this investigation, the terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" and "White" or "Anglo" are used interchangeably. After presenting the findings, several implications of the results for school counseling practice are discussed.

Hispanic American Students

Hispanic Americans represent the fastest growing ethnic

group in the United States today (Hunt, 1987). The number of Hispanic persons is expected to double in the next thirty years, exceeding the total number of African Americans living in the United States at that time. As a result of this rapid growth rate, Hispanic Americans will become the largest ethnic group in America (U.S. News and World Report, 1987).

Between 1968 and 1984, the number of Hispanic students attending public schools rose by 80 percent (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989). The dramatic increase in this student population has resulted in frequent classroom overcrowding and fewer educational resources that are necessary for helping Latino students realize their academic and personal potential (Phi Delta Kappan, 1985). To make matters worse, the vast majority of these youngsters come from poor families facing the persistent and stressful struggle of trying to raise their children with inadequate financial resources. All of these variables contribute to an increase in the types of problems Hispanic American students experience during the intermediate and secondary school years (Phi Delta Kappan, 1985).

When Hispanic students do manifest problems, school counselors are typically called upon to intervene and provide services to promote positive developmental outcomes. However, the effectiveness of many practitioners working with Hispanic youth is limited, in part, because of their lack of knowledge about the normal concerns they are likely

to have during their school years. To this end, the authors designed the following study to compare the types of worries Hispanic students manifested during the intermediate and secondary school years in contrast to their Anglo counterparts.

Method

Subjects

This study was conducted in two phases in which a total of 196 seventh and ninth graders participated. In Phase I, worries data were collected from 92 seventh grade students who were attending a moderately-sized public intermediate school in a metropolitan area in the southwestern part of the United States. The majority of students attending this school come from diverse ethnic groups with Hispanic youth representing the largest group. Among the students participating in this phase of the study, 71 percent (N=66) were identified as Hispanic Americans and 29 percent (N=26) were Anglo students. Of the Latino seventh grade students participating in Phase I, 50 percent (N=33) were females and 50 percent (N=33) males. In contrast, 53 percent (N=14) of the Anglo students were females and 46 percent (N=12) were males.

In Phase II, a nonrandomized sample of 104 ninth graders were selected to participate in the study. These students were also attending a public junior high school in the same city and the same school district as the participants in Phase I. In this school the majority of

students were Anglo with Hispanic and African American students comprising the next largest racial/ethnic groups. This school is located within a middle class neighborhood. Approximately one third of the students are bused to the school from the surrounding area. A breakdown of the students participating in Phase II indicated that 37 percent (N=38) were Hispanic and 63 percent (N=66) were Anglo students. Among the Hispanic students 50 percent (N=19) were female and 50 percent (N=19) males. Also, 60 percent (N=40) of the White high school students were females and 40 percent (N=26) males.

Instrumentation

A 28-item Worries Inventory was administered to the students participating in both phases of the study. The items used in this inventory were obtained from similar questions contained in the Adolescent Health Survey in a section designed to assess the concerns of youth (Adolescent Health Program, 1987). Using this Worries Inventory in other crosscultural studies, D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck (1991) found it to be a valid and reliable method for measuring children's and teenagers' worries.

The 28 items were classified into five major worry categories. These included worries about one's peers, family, school, various contemporary moral/social concerns, and issues related to a youngster's personal well-being. Figure 1 provides an overview of the items contained in each of these categories.

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Figure 1 About Here

Procedure

The Worries Inventories were administered in group settings within the participants' classrooms to students from whom informed consent had been obtained. Upon administering the surveys, the respondents were instructed to, "Indicate how much you worry about ...," by circling one of the numbers below each statement. The numbers were presented in scaled format and asked if the respondent worried "not at all" (1); "very little" (2); "somewhat" (3); "quite a bit" (4); and "very much" (5) about each of the worries listed on the inventory. The test administrators read each of the inventory items aloud to make it easier for any student who might have reading problems to accurately complete the instrument. The administration time for the test ranged from 10-15 minutes for the students to complete the instrument in this manner.

Results

To assess the degree to which White and Hispanic American youth reported being concerned about the various issues stated on the inventory, group means were calculated from the intermediate and secondary school students' responses. Next, a Mann-Whitney nonparametric test was used to examine whether significant differences existed between the mean worry scores obtained by the White and Hispanic

students. Table 1 provides an overview of the results of these data.

Please Insert
Table 1 About Here

As noted on Table 1, while the White and Hispanic students did not report significant differences on items related to their peers and school matters, they did manifest numerous differences regarding several of the items comprising the "Personal," "Family," and "Moral/Social Worry" categories. More specifically, the students differed most often in the "Family" (six out of seven items) and "Personal Worry" (five out of eight) categories. Significant differences were also noted on two of the five items used to measure students' "Moral/Social Worries."

Discussion

The findings reported above indicate that the Hispanic American students reported experiencing a similar level of concern about their peers and school-related matters in comparison to their Anglo counterparts. However, they expressed significantly greater worry about various family, personal, and moral/social issues. The authors explore a number of socioeconomic, cultural, and developmental considerations in attempting to explain these differences.

Family-Related Worries

Much has been written about the importance of the family and extended kinship system for the healthy development of Hispanic Americans (Baca Zinn, 1977; Keefe,

Padilla, & Carlos, 1978; Mindel, 1980; Sena-Rivera, 1979). Hispanic children, adolescents, and adults typically demonstrate a strong reliance on family and extended family members for emotional and social support, assistance with child-rearing responsibilities, financial support, and problem-solving assistance (Gibbs & Huang, 1989).

Although the primacy of the family is highly valued within the Hispanic culture, it has also been reported that many Latino families are currently experiencing substantial tension. This intra-familial tension often rises from a conflict between maintaining traditional values versus adopting more contemporary family patterns (Ramirez & Arce, 1981). In additional to this cultural conflict, a disproportionate number of Hispanic American parents have been reported to be unemployed, undereducated, and poor in comparison to White parents (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Lee & Richardson, 1991).

Having an awareness of these socioeconomic and cultural considerations, it may be easier to understand why the Hispanic students had significantly higher worry scores on issues related to their families. For instance, the common cultural value placed on family life is likely to have influenced the way the Hispanic students reacted to such items as, "I worry about one of my parents dying" and "I worry about my parents getting a divorce." Also, given the elevated rates of unemployment and poverty which hit many Latino families, it is little wonder that the Hispanic

students reported worrying much more about "my family not having enough money to get by" than the Anglo students.

Taken into mind the types of pressures mentioned earlier concerning changing Latino family patterns and the lack of economic resources to raise their offspring, it is further suggested that some parents may externalize their frustrations with these matters by physically lashing out and hitting their children during domestic conflicts. In a similar vein, the impact of these stressors might cause some Latino parents to internalize their sense of frustration by increasing their use of alcohol or drugs. Either of these possible scenarios might help explain the significantly higher levels of concern reported by the Hispanic students in terms of worrying about "one of my parents hitting me so hard I might be hurt" and expressing concern about their parents' drug and alcohol use.

Personal Worries

While some of the item differences manifested between the Hispanic and White students in the "Personal Worry" category were easy to explain, others presented greater difficulty. For instance, given the level of racism that currently exists in society, it is not surprising that the Hispanic students expressed significantly greater concern about "being unfairly treated because of my race" than the Anglo participants.

However, it was curious to note that the Hispanic students also expressed significantly more worry about "my

body developing in a normal way" than White youth of the same age. In considering possible factors that may have contributed to this observed difference, the authors were reminded that the developmental norms for physical growth during childhood and adolescence have generally been based upon studies involving White, middle class youth.

While these norms may accurately reflect the physical development of White, middle-class children and youth, several developmental experts have noted numerous variations regarding the physiological changes children and adolescents from diverse cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds undergo as they physically mature (Craig, 1992; Sprinthall & Collins, 1992). With this in mind, the authors suggest that the higher level of concern expressed by the Hispanic students regarding their "body developing in a normal way" may reflect subtle sensitivities that are related to culturally-based variations in physical growth patterns during the intermediate and secondary school years.

It has also been recently noted that the rate of adolescent pregnancies and the incidence of teenagers being infected with the HIV-virus is several times higher among Latino youth in comparison to White students (Casas, 1992). Considering the high rate of adolescent pregnancies and the rapid spread of the AIDS virus within many Hispanic communities, the authors suggested that there may be a relationship between the frequency which these sort of personal crises are occurring and the significant

differences noted in the Hispanic students' level of worry about "getting AIDS," "getting pregnant (or getting someone pregnant)," and "having someone do sexual things to me that I do not want them to do" in comparison to the White respondents.

Moral-Social Issues

As noted in Table 1, the Hispanic students also expressed a significantly higher level of concern on two of the five items contained in the "Moral/Social Worry" category in comparison to the White students. This included being more worried about "all the violence going on in my neighborhood" and greater concern for "all the hungry and poor people in our country." Two explanations are offered in attempting to make sense of these reported differences. First, Casas (1992) argued that, if the Hispanic respondents had more exposure to incidents of neighborhood violence and greater direct contact with poor and hungry persons than the White students, it would be reasonable to expect that these sort of life experiences might stimulate a different level of concern about these moral/social issues.

A second explanation involves broader consideration of possible differences which may characterize the moral development of youth from diverse cultural backgrounds. In this regard, several theorists have discussed unique distinctions in the ways various groups socialize their members according to different types of culturally-bound values. Examples of these sort of differences are noted in

the emphasis White, western cultural groups tend to place on the concept of individuality. In contrast, Hispanic persons are generally distinguished by the high value they place on the family and the community. These culturally-based differences normally emerge as a result of different child-rearing practices, parenting styles, and the various roles persons are expected to play within their family and the community at-large (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Lee & Richardson, 1991).

All of these factors represent unique aspects of the socialization process which impact on the ways in which people from different cultural backgrounds think about, feel about, and respond to other persons in their environment. Recognizing the tremendous impact of one's cultural background in the socialization process, the researchers suggest that the differences observed in the students' expressed concerns about neighborhood violence and poor and hungry people may be reflective of the diverse moral/social values and world views that Hispanic and White youth acquire in their development. In this regard, Daniels and D'Andrea (1992) recently reported on the ways in which the socialization of children and adolescents from diverse cultural backgrounds contributed to observed differences in the moral reasoning abilities.

While the findings generated from this study provide school counselors with much "food for thought," the researchers acknowledge a number of limitations inherent in

the design of the study. For instance, given that the students who participated in the investigation were not randomly selected, one should be cautious about overgeneralizing the reported findings.

Also, the authors recognize that the terms "Hispanic Americans" and "Latinos", have been frequently used to describe persons from many different cultural backgrounds. This may include Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and persons from a variety of other Central and South American countries. While most of the students who were identified as "Hispanic Americans" in this study may be more specifically classified as Mexican Americans, the fact that the researchers did not control for these sort of "within-group" differences reflects another threat to the external validity of the results. However, in spite of these limitations, the authors agree that the findings do have important implications for school counseling that will be discussed in the next section.

Implications for School Counselors

The results of this study have several implications for school counselors that are related to their understanding of students' psychological development, their professional training, and recommendations for service delivery. As mentioned earlier, because counselors are left to rely on traditional school counseling theories, they often underestimate various psychological strengths, interests,

and concerns students from diverse cultural backgrounds experience in their development.

The different types of worries Hispanic and White intermediate and secondary school students reported in this study confirm the notion that students' psychological development is a much more complex phenomenon to comprehend when cultural factors are taken into consideration. It is also suggested that the tendency for many school counselors to underestimate the complexity and differences which characterize the development of students from diverse backgrounds is often directly tied to their professional training experiences.

Too often, school counseling training programs overlook or minimize the impact of multicultural factors on the development of children and youth. As a result, practitioners frequently lack the type of multicultural counseling awareness, knowledge, and skills that are necessary to effectively work with students from diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds (Pedersen, 1988). With this professional training problem in mind, the authors strongly recommend that all school counseling programs assess their current level of commitment for providing effective multicultural counseling training to their own students. D'Andrea and Daniels (1991) provide a useful framework to which counselor educators might refer in attempting to assess the level of multicultural counseling

training that professional training programs provide students.

The results of the present study also have implications for the approaches school counselors might use specifically when working with Hispanic American students. Noting that Hispanic students expressed a greater level of worry about issues related to their families and their physical growth, counselors might be particularly sensitive to helping these youngsters explore such concerns in individual and small group counseling settings.

It might also be useful for school counselors to implement guidance activities designed to help increase intermediate and secondary students' understanding of the different concerns people from diverse cultural groups are likely to experience at various stages in their development. By providing students with these learning activities, it is hoped that they will increase their sensitivity and tolerance for differences and similarities that exist among people in general and their peers in particular.

Given the significantly higher worry scores the Hispanic youth indicated on items related to family concerns and the cultural value placed on family life, counselors are encouraged to be particularly open to the ways in which events happening within these students' homes are likely to impact their school behavior. Expanding on this point further, school counselors are encouraged to consider the usefulness of increasing outreach efforts to include

Hispanic students' parents when designing specific interventions to promote their children's academic development. This might involve something as simple as contacting their parents when improvement has been observed at school and encouraging them to reinforce their child's progress by making positive comments at home.

In using the Worry Inventory in other schools, the authors have been impressed with the degree to which administrators and teachers commented on how this sort off assessment helped them better understand the diverse nature of their student body and consider ways of addressing various student concerns in their regular classes. By disseminating research findings in this way, school counselors are able to encourage systemic changes in the organization of the school by increasing teachers' and administrators' awareness of the ways in which cultural factors effect students' development.

In conclusion, this study was designed to serve a two-fold purpose. First, it examined the different types of worries students' experience during the intermediate and secondary school years. Second, the researchers sought to investigate whether there were differences in the types of issues with which Hispanic American students were concerned in comparison to White youth. By presenting the results of this investigation, it is hoped that school counselors will exercise more thoughtfulness about the impact of students'

cultural background when planning interventions designed to promote their psychological growth and personal well-being.

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Figure 1
Worry Categories and Items

I. Personal Worries

a. dying soon.
b. getting AIDS.
c. my looks.
d. getting a job when I am older.
e. if my body is developing in a normal way.
f. being unfairly treated because of my race.
g. getting pregnant (or getting someone pregnant).
h. that someone will force me to do things I do not want them to do.

II. Family Worries

a. my family not having enough money to get by.
b. all the violence happening in my home.
c. one of my parents hitting me so hard that I will be hurt.
d. one of my parents dying.
e. my parents getting a divorce.
f. how much my father or mother drinks.
g. how much my father or mother uses marijuana or other kinds of drugs.

III. Moral/Social Worries

a. all the drugs and drinking I see around me.
b. all the hungry and poor people in our country.
c. a nuclear bomb being dropped on America.
d. all the violence going on in my neighborhood.
e. all the violence going on in the United States.

IV. School Worries

a. getting beat up in school.
b. how well I am doing in school.
c. passing an important test at school.

V. Peer Worries

a. how my friends treat me.
b. how well other kids like me.
c. losing my best friend.
d. my friends getting me into trouble.

Table 1
Results of the Worry Scores:
Comparing Responses from White and Hispanic American Students

Category and Items	White (N=104) (X)	SD	Hispanic (N=92) (X)	SD	F Value	p
I. Personal Worries						
a. dying soon	2.71	1.50	2.94	1.65	-.84	.40
b. getting AIDS	2.89	1.49	3.69	1.55	-3.38	.00**
c. my looks	3.26	1.20	3.38	1.31	-.67	.50
d. getting a job when I am older	3.16	1.33	3.39	1.41	-1.11	.26
e. Whether my body is developing in a normal way	2.55	1.26	3.19	1.42	-2.98	.00**
f. being unfairly treated because of my race	2.15	1.37	3.32	1.63	-4.52	.00**
g. worries about pregnancy	2.43	1.45	3.06	1.511	-2.65	.01*
h. someone forcing me to do sexual things I don't want to do	1.90	1.20	2.41	1.50	-2.11	.03*
II. Family-Related Worries						
a. my family not having enough money to get by	2.96	1.40	3.47	1.40	-2.35	.02*
b. all the violence happening in my home	1.96	1.25	2.26	1.48	-1.12	.26
c. parents hitting me so hard I might get hurt	1.58	1.10	2.10	1.45	-2.53	.01*
d. one of my parents dying	3.34	1.36	4.18	1.27	-4.04	.00**
e. parents getting a divorce	1.96	1.28	2.53	1.64	-1.99	.04*
f. how much parents drink	1.51	1.21	2.00	1.39	-2.87	.00**
g. parents using drugs	1.35	1.02	1.68	1.36	-1.97	.04*

(Table 1 continued)

III. Moral/Social Worries						
a. all the drugs and drinking I see around me	2.93	1 36	2.92	1.47	.-.06	.95
b. all the hungry and poor people in our country	3.23	1.06	3.56	1.05	-2.00	.04*
c. a nuclear bomb being dropped on America	2.27	1.44	2.69	1.59	-1.63	.10
d. all the violence happening in my neighborhood	2.03	1.28	2.78	1.45	-3.53	.00**
e. all the violence going on in the United States	3.28	1.09	3.36	1.20	-.64	.52
IV. School-Related Worries						
a. getting beat up at school	1.77	.96	2.07	1.23	-1.36	.17
b. how well I am doing at school	3.77	1.15	3.83	1.24	-.65	.51
c. passing an important test	3.85	1.10	4.10	1.11	-1.85	.06
V. Peer-Related Worries						
a. how my friends treat me	3.00	1.14	2.71	1.33	-1.65	.10
b. how well other kids like me	2.93	1.17	2.80	1.24	-.68	.49
c. losing my best friend	3.60	1.37	3.43	1.46	-.73	.47
d. my friends getting me into trouble	2.45	1.08	2.81	1.31	-1.81	.07

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$